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211011Z Mar 01

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AS-01	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	USNW-00
	DODE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00
	VCE-00	NSAE-00	SS-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	/004W						

-----D50BCB 211013Z /38

FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8476
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 001079

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR WILLIAMS
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER
PASS USAID FOR AFR/SA C. PALMA

E.O. 12958: DECL. 03/21/11
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT
MIGHT PLAY INTO MUGABE'S HANDS

REF: HARARE 1058

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CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARL IRVING. REASONS: 1.5
(B) AND (D).

MEDIA COVERAGE

1. (U) IN THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, AS REPORTED REFTTEL, TWO OF ZIMBABWE'S INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS HAVE DEVOTED PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE MARCH 8 INTRODUCTION IN THE U.S. SENATE OF THE ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT (ZDERA). ALTHOUGH THE ACCOUNTS IN BOTH PAPERS WERE GENERALLY FACTUAL, THEY BOTH EMPHASIZED THAT THE BILL SEEKS TO PUNISH PRESIDENT MUGABE AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND BREAKDOWN IN THE RULE OF LAW BY IMPOSING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND FREEZING THEIR ASSETS. NEITHER ARTICLE CLARIFIED THAT THE CALLS FOR TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND ASSET-FREEZING ARE CONTAINED IN THE NON-BINDING SENSE OF CONGRESS SECTION. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRINT AND BROADCAST MEDIA HAVE NOT TO DATE CARRIED A SINGLE STORY ON THE ZDERA, BUT WE DO NOT EXPECT THIS SILENCE TO LAST MUCH LONGER.

REACTIONS

2. (C) THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT RAISED WITH US DIRECTLY ITS CONCERNS ABOUT THE ZDERA, BUT PROBABLY ONLY BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN CONSUMED BY OTHER BUSINESS. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE GOZ FOCUSES ON THIS ISSUE AND CONVOKES THE CHARGE TO CONVEY -- IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS -- ITS CONCERNS ABOUT THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION. IN THE COURSE OF A MEETING

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ON ANOTHER TOPIC ON MARCH 20, THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUGGESTED TO CHARGE THAT THE ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT WOULD CALL ON THE U.S. TO "BE FAIR" WITH ZIMBABWE AND NOT SINGLE IT OUT FOR RUIN BY IMPOSING ECONOMIC SANCTIONS. HE WONDERED WHY THE UNITED STATES, VIEWED BY ZIMBABWE AS A FRIEND, SEEMED TO BE FOLLOWING "BRITISH INSTRUCTIONS." A NUMBER OF OUR DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS HERE, INCLUDING THE WORLD BANK, HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN THE LIKELY PROSPECTS OF THE ZDERA. CIVIL SOCIETY GENERALLY WELCOMES IT AS A SIGN THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY GENERALLY -- AND THE UNITED STATES SPECIFICALLY -- CARES ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IN ZIMBABWE. IN THE VIEW OF MANY OF OUR PRIVATE CONTACTS, ONLY INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE OF THE KIND ENVISIONED BY THE ZDERA CAN FORCE MUGABE AND HIS CRONIES TO RESTORE THE RULE OF LAW.

COMMENT

3. (C) WHILE WE STRONGLY AGREE THAT ONLY INTERNATIONAL AND

REGIONAL PRESSURE ON THE MUGABE REGIME WILL BE EFFECTIVE IN HALTING ZIMBABWE'S SLIDE TOWARD POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DESTRUCTION, WE WISH TO POINT OUT THAT THE ZDERA MIGHT HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT. MUGABE AND HIS CABINET ARE LIKELY TO EMPLOY A TIME-TESTED TACTIC IN PORTRAYING THE BILL AS ANOTHER UNJUST TOOL OF WESTERN, PRO-BRITISH INTERESTS, AND PROBABLY LABEL IT AS RACIST INTERFERENCE. FM MUDENGE TOLD FORMER AMBASSADOR MCDONALD LAST JULY THAT THE ZIMBABWE DEMOCRACY ACT (WHICH DIED IN COMMITTEE IN THE HOUSE DURING THE PREVIOUS CONGRESSIONAL SESSION) HAD SET THE GOZ ON A
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WAR FOOTING AND THAT THEY WOULD FIGHT US ON IT WITH ALL MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL. WE ANTICIPATE SIMILAR BLUSTERY RHETORIC -- IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE -- ONCE THE CURRENT BILL BEGINS TO MOVE THROUGH THE SENATE. IN ADDITION, THE ZDERA COULD WEAKEN THE GROWING INCLINATION WITHIN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) -- PARTICULARLY SOUTH AFRICA -- TO TAKE A TOUGHER LINE WITH ZIMBABWE, IF THEY FEEL OBLIGATED TO RALLY AROUND MUGABE IN THE NAME OF REGIONAL SOLIDARITY. THOUGH WE AT POST SHARE FULLY THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN THE ZDERA, WE ARE DUTY-BOUND TO PROVIDE OUR ASSESSMENT THAT THE BILL MAY BECOME, AT LEAST IN THE NEAR TERM, ANOTHER PROPAGANDA TOOL FOR MUGABE IN HIS EFFORT TO HOLD ONTO POWER BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY. ONE WAY TO MITIGATE THE GOZ'S LIKELY DEMONIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES IS FOR US TO CONDUCT A VERY PUBLIC EFFORT TO COORDINATE OUR APPROACH TOWARD ZIMBABWE WITH THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS.
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